

Assigning Suggestions in a Time of Uncertainty

NAWGJ is working with the USAG Women's Technical Committee on developing suggestions to enhance the safety of judges as we prepare for re-entry into the judging season. We are working on three different documents with suggestions for (1) assigning, (2) meet directors, and (3) judges. This is the first of the series and addresses suggestions for assigning. If you have questions or suggestions to enhance the assigning of judges in this time of uncertainty, please send them to your RJD via your SJD.

Some states have asked NAWGJ for a statement to post on their website or to send to judges when they are assigning meets for 2020-21. They would like to acknowledge some of the uncertainties that might be associated with the upcoming season. Thus, we have prepared the statement below if you would like to use it. It is designed to provide assistance if you find it helpful. It is **not** required.

We are living in a world of uncertainty regarding the status of gymnastics meets in the upcoming year. In the best of circumstances, meets will thrive and judging opportunities will be similar to previous years. On the other hand, some meets may be cancelled, postponed, or have fewer participants. NAWGJ is issuing contracts for 2020-21 with the understanding that the status of meets may change depending on the trajectory of the virus, the policies of gymnastics governing bodies, as well as local, state, and federal guidelines regarding COVID-19. Some or all contracts may be cancelled if the meet has to be postponed/cancelled or if the number of participants is too small to host a successful event. The assigners will notify judges as soon as possible regarding cancellations.

Accepting a meet assignment is a personal decision. Although we anticipate that all Meet Directors will embrace local, state, and national safety standards, all judges must assess factors that affect their **own** health and safety (as well as those of their family members) when considering their availability to judge or their acceptance of a contract. Likewise, all judges must consider the safety of other judges and participants at the meet. If you become ill or are exposed to a person who is ill prior to a meet, please contact your assigner as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through this process together. We all look forward to a positive judging season but must be prepared to be flexible if conditions change.

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Suggestions For Your Consideration When Assigning

The suggestions below are presented as ideas for your consideration in assigning. We recognize that some of these ideas may not be possible in states with a small number of judges or in states that experience a high demand for judges on particular weekends. Consider these ideas to be food for thought.

1. When feasible, assigners may want to assign one or more alternates as on-call judges for meets. This practice will reduce the stress involved when assigners need to find replacements for judges who become ill or who may have been exposed to someone who is ill. If alternates are known to be available, it may make it more likely that judges will feel they can cancel from a meet if they are ill, thus increasing the safety of all meet participants. States that decide to use on-call alternates for some or all meets should determine the process that will work best for them when assigning alternates and should clearly communicate this process, as well as item 2 below, to all judges. *Note to gymjas users: gymjas has been adapted to accommodate alternate assignments (see pull down menu for event assignments); additional changes are being made to easily identify alternates so they can be re-assigned to other meets if needed; updates are forthcoming.* Alternatively, you may want to consider waiting to assign alternates until a couple of weeks before the meet or until all meets have been assigned.
2. Judges who accept an assignment as an alternate and subsequently are offered a contract to judge another meet (NCAA, USAG, AAU, etc.) should feel free to accept the contract without repercussions. We always want them to judge if needed. However, they should immediately inform the assigner that their availability has changed.
3. If Meet Directors request a walking Meet Referee, assigners will have an additional option for replacing a judge who becomes ill.
4. NAWGJ assigners should work with their USAG State Administrative Committee Chair (SACC) to identify a process to encourage Meet Directors to provide logistical information (particularly hotel arrangements) as early as possible. Although some states include this information in the contract at the time of issue, other states wait to provide the information until the meet schedule is known. In the COVID 19 environment, judges should be notified of hotel arrangements and the health screening procedures that will be used for the meet as soon as this information is known rather than wait until the entire schedule is available. Judges should be allowed to cancel their contract after the logistical information becomes available if they feel that the arrangements may not provide a safe environment for their individual circumstances. This is another reason why alternate contracts could be helpful.
5. NAWGJ (Canon 11) states that NAWGJ does not tolerate discrimination related to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identification, religion, or age. It is not acceptable to pre-determine that a judge will not be assigned to a meet because she/he may be part of a vulnerable group for COVID. Judges are responsible for determining their own health status and for making a personal decision regarding the acceptance of an assignment.
6. Meet Directors should not be charged additional assigning fees for contracting alternate judges. This is a service NAWGJ will provide as we work together with Meet Directors to provide our athletes with a safe competitive environment.

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